The Texas Revolution

One American's Story

In 1831, Mary Austin Holley visited her cousin Stephen F. Austin in Texas. She decided not to settle there, but published a widely read guide to the territory. Holley's guide was credited with bringing many settlers to Texas territory. Holley wrote approvingly of her cousin's vision.

Mary Austin Holley

PRIMARY SOURCE

"When, in the progress of years, the state of Texas shall take her place among the powerful empires of the American continent, her citizens will doubtless regard Col. Austin as their patriarch, and children will be taught to hold his name in reverence. . . . Col. Austin began the work, and was the first to open the wilderness."

—Mary Austin Holley, *Texas: Observations Historical, Geographical and Descriptive* 1833

Stephen F. Austin's father, Moses Austin, had spent the last years of his life chasing a dream. He had hoped to found a colony for Americans in Spanish Texas. A week after his father's death in 1821, Stephen F. Austin was standing on Texas soil. His father's dream would become his destiny. Austin led the surge of American settlement in Texas.

Changes in Spanish Texas

KEY QUESTION How did American settlers cause problems in Texas?

Texas—the land the Spanish explorers called ***Tejas*** (tay•HAHS)—bordered the Louisiana Territory. *Tejas* had lush forests, plains, and rich soil, but relatively few settlers. When Austin arrived, fewer than 5,000 ***Tejanos*** (tay•HAH•nohs), people of Spanish heritage who thought of Texas as their home, lived in Texas.

American Settlers in Texas In 1820, to defend the land from hostile Native Americans, the Spanish government offered huge tracts of land to *empresarios*—people who agreed to find settlers for the land. When Spanish

settlers did not respond to their offer of land, the Spanish agreed to let American Moses Austin start a colony there, provided the settlers followed Spanish law. Shortly after Stephen F. Austin arrived in Texas in 1821, Mexico successfully gained its independence from Spain. *Tejas* was now a part of the new nation of Mexico. With the change in government, the Spanish land grant given to Austin's father was worthless.

Stephen F. Austin traveled to Mexico City to persuade the new Mexican government to let him start his American colony. The Mexican government would consent only if the new settlers agreed to become Mexican citizens and members of the Roman Catholic Church.

Between 1821 and 1825, Austin attracted about 300 families to his new settlement. These original Texas settler families are known as the "Old Three Hundred." He demanded proof that each family head worked hard and did not use alcohol. The colony attracted more and more settlers. Some were looking for a new life, some were escaping from the law, and others were looking for a chance to grow rich. By 1830, the population had swelled to about 25,000, with Americans outnumbering the *Tejanos* six to one.

ONLINE PRIMARY SOURCE

Hear the perspectives at the **Research & Writing Center @ ClassZone.com**

Rising Tensions in Texas As more Americans settled in Texas, tensions increased. Americans resented Mexican laws. They were unhappy that offi-

COMPARING *Perspectives*

By the 1820s, non-Mexican settlers were a growing presence in Texas. *Tejanos* were quickly outnumbered. Most of the American settlers refused to learn Spanish and resented the Mexican laws they were expected to honor. Different perspectives of the changes in Texas are quoted below.

Against Settlement

"The Americans . . . have taken possession of practically all the eastern part of Texas, in most cases without the permission of the authorities. They immigrate constantly, finding no one to prevent them, and take possession of the sitio [site] that best suits them without either asking leave or going through any formality other than that of building their homes."

attributed to Mexican soldier José María Sánchez, April 1828

For Settlement

"My object, the sole and only desire of my ambitions since I first saw Texas, was to . . . settle it with an intelligent, honorable, and enterprising people. . . . Texas should be effectually, and fully, Americanized—that is—settled by a population that will harmonize with their neighbors on the East, in language, political principles, common origin, sympathy, and even interest."

— Stephen F. Austin, ca. 1837

CRITICAL THINKING Make Inferences Why do you think American settlers believed they could Americanize Texas?

cial documents were written in Spanish. Slave owners became angry when Mexico outlawed slavery in 1829. They wanted to maintain slavery so they could grow cotton. Austin persuaded the government to allow slave owners to keep their slaves.

On the other hand, the *Tejanos* found the Americans difficult to live with, too. *Tejanos* thought that the Americans believed they were superior and deserved special privileges. The Americans seemed unwilling to adapt to or to understand Mexican laws.

Responding to warnings of a possible revolution, the Mexican government cracked down on Texas. First, it closed the state to further American immigration. Next, it required Texans to pay taxes for the first time. Finally, to enforce these laws, the government sent more Mexican troops to Texas.

ANALYZE CAUSES AND EFFECTS Explain how American settlers caused problems in Texas.

Texans Revolt Against Mexico

KEY QUESTION What events led to Texas's independence from Mexico?

The actions of the Mexican government caused angry protests from Americans and many *Tejanos*. Some Texans talked about breaking away from Mexico. But Austin remained loyal to Mexico.

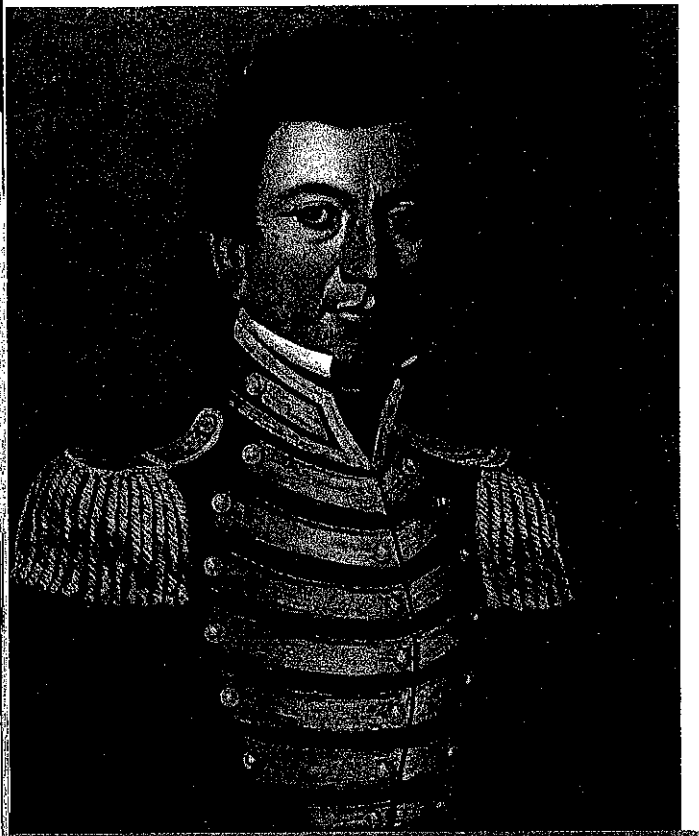
War Begins In 1833, Austin went to Mexico City to present a list of requested reforms to Mexican officials. The most urgent request was that Texas become a self-governing state within Mexico. Mexican president **General Antonio López de Santa Anna** agreed to most of the reforms. But Santa Anna then learned of a letter Austin had written. If his requests weren't met, wrote Austin, he would support breaking away from Mexican rule. This was rebellion! Santa Anna jailed Austin for almost a year. The furious Texans were ready to rebel.

(*left*) Mexican general Antonio López de Santa Anna liked to be known as the "Napoleon of the West."

Santa Anna sent more troops to Texas. In October 1835, Mexican soldiers marched to the town of Gonzales. They had orders to seize a cannon used by the Texans for protection against Native Americans. Texas volunteers had hung a flag over the big gun that said, "Come and Take It."

The Mexican troops failed to capture the cannon. In December, Texans drove Mexican troops out of an old mission in San Antonio called the Alamo that was used as a fortress. Angered by these insults, Santa Anna and 6,000 troops headed for Texas.

The Fight for the Alamo On March 1–2, 1836, Texans met at a settlement called Washington-on-the-Brazos to decide what to do about Santa Anna's troops. They decided to declare Texas a free and independent republic. **Sam Houston** was placed in command of the Texas army.



History Makers

Juan Seguín 1806–1890

Juan Seguín was a *Tejano* who wanted Texas to remain independent and not become part of the United States. He was a hero of the Battle of the Alamo. Seguín was elected to the Texas Senate in 1837 and was mayor of San Antonio twice. However, Seguín was often betrayed and harassed by American newcomers who mistrusted *Tejanos*. Finally he was forced to move to Mexico in 1842. In 1846–1848, Seguín fought against Americans in the War with Mexico.

CRITICAL THINKING Compare In what ways did the goals of Seguín and the Americans in Texas differ?

ONLINE BIOGRAPHY For more on Juan Seguín, go to the **Research & Writing Center @ ClassZone.com**

Juan Seguín (wahn seh•GEEN) led a band of 25 *Tejanos* in support of revolt. Also among the Texas volunteers were free African Americans, but the Texas army hardly existed. There were two small forces ready to stand up to Santa Anna's army. One was a company of some 300 to 400 men, led by James Fannin, stationed at Goliad, a fort in southeast Texas. The second was a company of about 180 volunteers at the Alamo. Headed by James Bowie and William Travis, this small force also included such famous frontiersmen as Davy Crockett.

On February 23, 1836, Santa Anna's troops surrounded San Antonio. The next day, Mexicans began their siege of the Alamo. Two nights later, Travis scrawled a message to the world: "The enemy has demanded surrender. . . . I have answered . . . with a cannon shot. . . . I shall never surrender or retreat." Juan Seguín, a *Tejano*, spoke Spanish, so he was chosen to carry the declaration through enemy lines. Seguín got the message through to other Texas defenders. But when he returned, he saw the Alamo in flames.

The Alamo's defenders held off the Mexican attack for 12 violent days. On the 13th day, Santa Anna ordered over 1,800 men to storm the fortress. The Texans met the attackers with a hailstorm of cannon and gun fire until the Texans ran out of ammunition. At day's end, all but seven Texans were dead and more than 1,000 Mexicans had fallen. The **Battle of the Alamo** was over.

The survivors were executed. A total of 183 Alamo defenders died. Only a few women and children were spared. Hundreds of Mexicans also perished. The slaughter shocked Texans—and showed them how hard they would have to fight for their freedom from Mexico.

Victory at San Jacinto With Santa Anna on the attack, Texans—both soldiers and settlers—fled eastward. Houston sent a message to the troops at Goliad, ordering them to retreat. They were captured by Mexican forces, who executed more than 300. But even in retreat and defeat, Houston's army doubled. Now it was a fighting force of 800 angry men. It included *Tejanos*, American settlers, and many free and enslaved African Americans.

In late April 1836, Houston surprised Santa Anna near the San Jacinto (san juh•SIN•toh) River. The Texans advanced screaming "Remember the Alamo!" and "Remember Goliad!"

In just 18 minutes, the Texans killed more than half of the Mexican army. Santa Anna had to sign a treaty giving Texas its freedom. With the Battle of San Jacinto, Texas was an independent nation.

Republic of Texas In December 1836, Texans raised the official flag of the independent nation of Texas, nicknamed the **Lone Star Republic**. Sam Houston was elected president.

Many Texans wanted to be part of the United States. In 1836 the Texas government asked Congress to **annex**, or join, Texas to the Union. Some Northerners objected. Some feared that Texas would allow slavery and upset the balance between free and slave states. Some opposed any expansion of slavery. Others feared that annexing Texas would lead to war with Mexico. In response Congress voted against annexation.

SEQUENCE EVENTS Describe the events that led to Texas's independence from Mexico.

Texas Revolution *1836*

Connect Geography & History

1. **Place** What geographic features marked the boundaries of the disputed territory?
2. **Clarify** What does the map show as a major disagreement left unresolved by the war?

2 Section Assessment

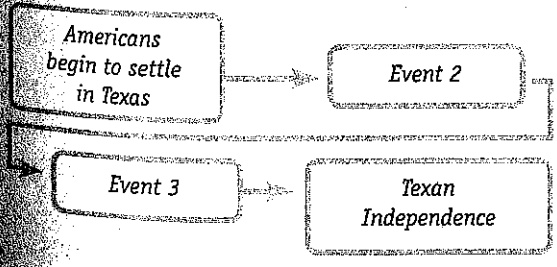
ONLINE QUIZ
For test practice, go to
Interactive Review @ ClassZone.com

TERMS & NAMES

1. Explain the importance of
   - Stephen F. Austin
   - *Tejanos*
   - Sam Houston
   - Antonio López de Santa Anna
   - Juan Seguín
   - Battle of the Alamo
   - Lone Star Republic

USING YOUR READING NOTES

2. **Sequence** Complete the diagram you started at the beginning of this section. Then expand the diagram for each of the other important events in this section.



KEY IDEAS

3. How and why did Texas attract American settlers?
4. How did the Mexican government respond to the Texas rebellion?

CRITICAL THINKING

5. **Analyze Motives** Why do you think Stephen F. Austin thought it necessary to demand proof of settlers' high morals for his colony?
6. **Recognize Effects** How did losing the Battle of the Alamo serve as a turning point for Texas independence?
7. **Connect Economics & History** Why was Texas a magnet for land speculators and investors?
8. **Writing Speech** Write a one-page persuasive speech from Stephen F. Austin to the Mexican government asking for permission to form a colony in Texas.